



MEDIA RELEASE

For immediate release

From: Catherine Butterfield, Media and Communications Consultant, Mercy Health

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Mercy Place offers respite and a home away from home

Since arriving at Mercy Place Dandenong residential aged care home for a three-week respite stay, keen amateur photographer John Johnson has viewed the concept of respite care through a whole new lens.

John and his wife Joan have been married for 65 years and have barely spent a day apart, so there was some reluctance from the 92-year-old to take up the offer of three weeks' respite at a Mercy Health home for the price of one week.

"We've never been away from each other in all those years," John says. "It's tough but I had to give Joan a break."

Joan has been caring for John at their Dandenong home since surgery on his foot 13 months ago left him confined to a wheelchair. The couple receives some in-home care through their Home Care Package, but 86-year-old Joan needed a rest from the physical demands that caring for John takes.

Joan visits John at Mercy Place Dandenong every day she can during his respite stay. When she is not at the home, John has taken advantage of some of the activities and social engagements that the aged care home offers daily. There is a men's group at the home as well as a pool table, regular bowling activities and many-a-resident's favourite – happy hour!

"It's very nice here and the staff try their best to make it feel like home," John says. "The food has been excellent, too."

To make his short-term stay feel as homely as possible, the walls of John's light-filled room at Mercy Place Dandenong are plastered with photos of his beautiful family – his two children, three grandchildren and two great grandchildren. Many of the images on the walls are photos that John has craftily edited on his laptop.

"He's very good with his camera and computer," Joan says. "John took a photo of me and he took another photo of pelicans. He then put one photo on top of the other on his laptop. It looked like I was being eaten by a giant pelican!"

If John returns for another stay at the home, he may be recruited to teach other residents a few of his photography tricks, or even hold an exhibition, says Mercy Place Dandenong Service Manager Ralf Pelz.

"We like to piggyback off the skills of our residents and respite clients," Ralf says. "There is so much knowledge and so many skills in our resident groups so we like to get residents to share their skills. It helps with engagement and helps to make our home feel as much like a home-away-from-home as possible for our respite clients."

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For interviews and photo opportunities, please contact:

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